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NOTES ON SIRACH.

1. *The name Sirach.*

NOWHERE else does the name Sirach occur in Hebrew literature, Fritzsche remarks in his *Exegetical Handbook to the Apocrypha*. This word like other *hapax legomena* has suffered from erroneous interpretation. Only one explanation has so far been offered, that of Schürer, who says that the name Σιράχ is equivalent to סיראך "shield" (*History of the Jewish People in the time of Christ*, II, 594). This interpretation is also accepted by the editor of the Hebrew fragments of Sirach (Preface, p. ix, note 3). It seems somewhat strange that a term meaning "shield" should have been employed as a proper noun. This of course is not a conclusive objection to the derivation, for there is a parallel in the name תחרע (1 Chron. ix; cf. viii. 35), which is certainly identical with תחרה in Exod. xxviii. 32 and xxxix. 23. The Syriac Version (Peshitta) renders in both passages ¹ סירם. This makes the interpretation of Sirach as "shield" highly problematical. For the Syriac appears to be the accusative plural of the Greek σειρά. Payne-Smith is right in tracing the Syriac to the Greek (*Thesaurus Syriacus*, col. 2619). It is, however, inconceivable that, as early as 200 B.C., a Greek appellative should have been borrowed by a Semitic tongue and used as a Jew's name. A process of this character needs time for its evolution, and the single century that elapsed since the beginning of Greek influence under Alexander the Great could not have produced such a remarkable metamorphosis. But even if one becomes familiarized with the conception that the Greek σειρά became a Jewish proper name, the difficulty still remains that during an entire epoch this proper name should only have been borne by one man. And again an entirely foreign name would certainly not have been given to a distinguished Jew like the author of this book.

I regard the word סיראך as an abbreviation of אספירה. The Syriac version has indeed at the beginning and at the end of the Book of

¹ For typographical reasons, I transliterate the Syriac in Hebrew characters.

Sirach the words אַסְפִּירָא and בֶּן אַסְפִּירָא. See also Payne-Smith, col. 306.

This Fritzsche (in his *Exegetical Handbook to the Apocrypha*, Introd., p. x) regards as a participle of the verb אָסֵר, and it would mean *vinctus*, "bound." It would therefore be the surname of Simeon, the father of Jesus Sirach. I however see in this word more than a mere participle; it seems to me to be the Aramaic form of the Hebrew proper name אַסְפִּיר, without vowels, in Aramaic אַסְפִּירָא not אַסְפִּירָה. The name is first met with in Exod. vi. 24 as one of Korah's children, and consequently also in the similar list in 1 Chron. vi. 7, 8, 22. In Exod. vi. 24, and Chron. vi. 7, 22, the Peshitta has אַסְפִּיר (in verse 8 the name has dropped out of the Peshitta). The form אַסְפִּיר is remarkable because the reduplication of the ס is omitted. The LXX, ed. van Ess, has Exod. vi. 24 Ἀσείρ (like Σειράχ), but in Chron. vi. 22, 23, 37 Ἀσήρ. We accordingly see that אַסְפִּיר was a usual name in the tribe of Levi, which harmonizes with the statement in one version that the author of the Book of Sirach was a priest.

To us a fact of far greater importance is that the name אַסְפִּיר occurs during and after the Babylonian exile. In 1 Chron. iii. 17 we read וּבְנֵי יְכֻנָּה אָסֵר שָׁלְחִיאֵל בָּנוֹ where, however, it is not quite certain whether אָסֵר is the surname of Jechoniah or his son; the LXX takes Asir for the son of Jechoniah, in the Peshitta the word is altogether missing; the Aramaic version is ambiguous. For our inquiry the circumstance that Asir in this text is one of two twin names given to the same person is of considerable importance, as will be seen further on. But even if in the period of the exile is only a twin name, its mere mention already justifies the assumption that it was not forgotten at a later period. We may confidently assert that the author of the Book of Sirach bore the name אַסְפִּיר as a family inheritance. The post-exilic period shows a comparatively large proportion of names with an Aramaic tinge. It is true that only a few have come down to us, but even among these few there is a mass of Aramaic forms. See עֲדָנָה Ezra x. 30, Neh. xii. 15; עַיִוִין Ezra x. 27; זְבִינָה Ezra x. 43; Ezra ii. 42, Neh. vii. 45; צִחְחָה Ezra ii. 44, Neh. xi. 21; Neh. vii. 46; חַשּׁוֹפָה Ezra ii. 44, Neh. vii. 46; נְקוֹדָה Ezra ii. 48, 60, Neh. vii. 50, 62; חַקּוֹפָה Ezra ii. 51, Neh. vii. 53; פְּרוֹדָה Ezra ii. 55; פְּרִידָה Neh. vii. 57; בָּעֵנָה Neh. iii. 4, vii. 7; חַגְבָּה Neh. vii. 48; Neh. vii. 54; מְחִידָה Neh. vii. 54; בָּעֵנָה Neh. vii. 56; בָּאָרָה 1 Chron. vii. 37; Neh. vii. 38; חַטְמִיפָּה ibid. vii. 39. If, however, we should doubt the Aramaic character of the names here cited, it is undeniable that פְּלָחָה Neh. x. 25 (Hebrew פְּלָח), or עֲבָדָה (Hebrew עֲבָד), xi. 17, are Aramaic forms.

Once it is expressly stated that the Aramaic name is used instead of the Hebrew name **וְקָלִילִתָא**¹ (*Ezra* x. 23, *Neh.* viii. 7, *ibid.* x. 11). In comparison with **בְּלַי בְּלָנָה** *Neh.* x. 9, xii. 5, 18, also seems to be pure Aramaic.

Most instructive is the well-known name Ezra. In Hebrew the name reads **עֶזֶר** *i Chron.* iv. 4 *pro quo* (*Gesenius, Thesaurus*, 1840) **עֹזֶרֶת** verse 17. Compare **עֶזֶר** *i Chron.* xii. 10, *Neh.* iii. 19. This does not prove that **עֹזֶרֶת** is Aramaic, as it may be a doublet of **עֶזֶר**, compare **עֲזָרָה** **עֲזָרָה**; **עֹזֶרֶת** as appellatives. But the form with **א** in **עֹזֶרֶת** is distinctly Aramaic; compare **עֲקָבָה** (*Levy, Targum-Wörterbuch*, II, 235²), **חָלָם**, **חָלָמָה** (*Targum-Wörterbuch*, II, 235²), Aramaic **חָלָם**. Ezra further illustrates the fact not rare among the Jews that the same name frequently recurs in a family. One of Ezra's descendants was Rabbi Eleazar Ben Azariah; and both names, Eleazar and Azariah, appear at the head of Ezra's genealogical tree (*Ezra* vii. 1, 3; see *Bacher, Agada der Tannaiten*, II, 220, note 2). Compare also *Midrash Shir Hashirim*, I, 10, p. 12, Ed. Grünhut. The name **אֵסִיר**, which we meet in the tribe of Levi, has become Aramaized in the exilic and subsequent periods into **אַסְיָירָה** as **עֹזֶרֶת** into **עֹזֶרֶת**; cp. also *Sifra* Neh. vii. 55.

If we consider how in all ages and countries proper names, and especially those of persons, are changed and abbreviated, we will not be surprised that **אַסְיָירָה** should have been shortened into **סִירָה**. We have the same shortness in **מִבֵּית הַסּוּרִים**, Eccles. iv. 13. On **אַבְוֹן . . . בִּן** see *Frankel, Vorstudien*, 102, note g. A similar aphaeresis is shown by the name **אַבְנָא**, which in the Jerusalem Talmud is transformed into **אַבָּן** or **אַבָּן**. Other names without the reduplicative dagesh are still more easily abbreviated, e.g. **לִיאָוָר** for **לִיאָוָרָה**, **אַלְכָסָא** for **אַלְכָסָאָה**. **"Αλεξά** itself is an abbreviation of **אַלְכָסָנְדָר**, **'Αλέξανδρος**. The change of the Biblical **אַהֲרֹן** into the Talmudical **הָרָן** is noted by *Steinschneider* in his essay on "Arabic Names among the Jews" (*J. Q. R.*, IX, 1897, page 606); though I could not verify the reference he gives to *Canticles Rabba* ii. 5. In Syriac **אַסְיָירָה** is found as well as **סִירָה**, just as **לִיאָוָר** and **לִיאָוָרָה** in the idiom of the Jerusalem Talmud. The Greek form **Σειράχ** alone remains to be explained. *Schrer* justly refers to a similar phenomenon in **'Ακελδαμά** (*Acts of the Apostles* i. 19) for **לְקָדָם**, but the true ground of this phenomenon was first discovered by *Dalman*.

¹ In the LXX ix. 23 according to the numbering of the LXX: **Κώνος**, **οὐτός ἐστι Καλιτάς**, the usual formula of double names (cp. **ὸς καὶ** in the Flinders-Petrie *Papyri*, ed. *Mahaffy*, II, 23. 15). In the Peshitta there is another reading.

² *Dalman, Aramäische Dialectproben*, p. 50, writes **עֲקָבָה**.

(*Grammatik des jüdisch-Palaestinischen Aramäisch*, p. 161, note 6); he asserts that the final χ is intended to indicate that the word is undeclinable. 'Ιωσήχ for יְוִסֵּחַ Luke iii. 26 presents a similar form. For קָרִית אֲרָבָע the LXX has Ἀρβάχ, see *Monatsschrift*, XLII, 4, note 1. Remarkably enough, the Rabbinical literature has something similar. Haman's grandfather was, according to the Hagadath Esther iii. 1 (page 26, Ed. Buber), סִירָא; according to Targum Sheni (in Lagarde, *Hagiographi Chaldaice*, p. 243¹). In Josippon, chap. 15, p. 47, Warsaw, 1877, שִׁירָךְ; *Seder Haddoroth*, Warsaw, 1878, page 138, ibid. שִׁירָךְ בֶּן סִירָא (see also edition Warsaw, 1891, p. 112 b). Cp. עַמּוֹם סִירָךְ in Azariah dei Rossi inchap. 32. These citations incidentally show how the Apocrypha, though in a foreign tongue, was sedulously studied by Rabbinical Jews. I will only mention the strange etymology in בֶּן זְרוּעַ=בֶּן סִירָא (Warsaw, 1874), p. 85: ספר מהרי'ל. Compare the essay, *La nativité de Ben Sirah*, by I. Levi, in *Revue des Études Juives*, XXIX, 197.

2. The Author.

Our supposition that Sirach = אֱסִירָא = אֱסִיר lends probability to the assumption that Jesus Sirach was a priest, for it is under the Levites we meet the proper name אֱסִיר. That Jesus Sirach was of priestly origin is expressly stated in the *Codex Sinaiticus*, L. 27. We must carefully distinguish this statement from Syncellus' error (*Chron.*, edit. Dindorf, I, 525), that Sirach was a *High Priest*. The book itself exhibits noticeable partiality for the priestly clan, as Geiger correctly saw (*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, XII, 536–543; *Posthumous Writings*, III, 275–282). Hence, the name Eleazar found in Jesus Sirach's genealogical tree in the Aldine edition and in the Alexandrine Codex is not to be rejected. Herzfeld (*History of the Jewish People*, II, 75) is also inclined to attribute some importance to this reading. But his supposition that it refers to Eleazar ben Charsum is certainly untenable. On the other hand, the view that Jesus Sirach's grandfather was called Eleazar Zunz² accepts as proved. We have already remarked that the name Eleazar frequently occurs in the priestly pedigrees. Several priests of that name are known, and its occurring in the family of the priest Jesus Sirach is at least probable. We therefore assert that by Eleazar was probably meant not the grandfather but the father of Jesus Sirach. The Alexandrine Codex has in six copies Σεράχ

¹ In *Soferim*, XIII, 6, this name is missing.

² *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge*, 1st ed., p. 100, 2nd ed., p. 106; he writes Eliezer instead of Eleazar.

'Ελεάζαρ, in two copies Σειράχ 'Ελεάζαρος. See Fritzsche on L. 27, from which it would seem that Jesus' father had a double name, Sirach Eleazar, in Hebrew אלעזר אסיר¹. The Aldine Codex has, however, Σειράχ 'Ελεαζάρον, according to which Eleazar may have been either father or grandfather of Jesus. But it must always be borne in mind that the difficult reading deserves preference over the easier reading, for the obscurity of the former is a mark of its originality, while the latter is the product of interpretation. Grätz (*Geschichte*, II, 2nd edition, p. 281, note 1) accepts the reading of the Alexandrine Code. Σειράχ 'Ελεάζαρ, side by side, without grammatical case relation, is only susceptible of one explanation: that Jesus' father had two names, Sirach and Eleazar. But this double name was not acceptable to succeeding writers. Some codices omit the second name and only retain the unusual Sirach. Others adopt the genitive form "Sirach the son of Eleazar." But the double name is original and characteristic of the entire epoch. We have spoken above of קלה הָוֹא קְלִיטָה and of יַבְנֵה אֲסִיר. How many of such double names must have existed if the small list of those that have come down to us presents two examples².

Matathias' five sons have each a surname (1 Macc. ii. 2-5). Cp. *Babli Temurah*, 16 a, where it is said that עבץ (1 Chron. iv. 9) was really called יהודה. Similarly the superscription at the head of the Syriac version should be explained. Simeon Sirach is a double name like Sirach Eleazar. But, in view of יַבְנֵה אֲסִיר, the order of names in the Syriac version is more probable than Sirach Eleazar of the Greek codices, while on the other hand Eleazar seems, on the grounds above stated, more authentic than Simeon. Whence the latter name has been derived, has not yet been ascertained. It seems to point to a special Syriac tradition as in the forms סִירָא אֲסִירָא and סִירָא. This statement is repeated as far as I know only in Epiphanius (*De prophetarum ritis*, Migne, *Patrol.*, Greek section, XLIII, 427), whence it is quoted in the Syriac Book " כתבא דרבוריთא "The Book of the Bee" in *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, Semitic Series, vol. I, part ii, page 47: שְׁמֻעָן בֶּן סִירָא מֵית בְּשִׁנְיָא: עט שְׁמֻעָן בֶּן סִירָא מֵית בְּשִׁנְיָא: In the English version, page 73: "Simon the son of Sirach (Sirach) died in peace in his own town." I do not know how to take it. We must complete the statement by prefixing to שְׁמֻעָן the name Jesus thus: ישוע שְׁמֻעָן בֶּן, or the whole passage should be completed

¹ Fritzsche adds a query to 'Ελεάζαρος; but the word is quite correct, for Hebrew names are very often provided with Greek nominative endings.

² Cp. *Tosefta Gittin*, VIII, 5, p. 332 (Edition Zuckerman), הל שי שמות. On Greek and Hebrew double names see my work, *Greek and Latin Borrowed Terms in the Talmud*, § 107.

ישוע בר שמעון בר ישוע בר שמעון בר אסירא, or more correctly שמעון בר שמעון בר אסירא, in which case Simeon would correspond to the Eleazar of the Greek codices. Anyhow, it is more advisable to assume only two generations, as there is no special reason for tracing Jesus Sirach's pedigree to his grandfather. The names are taken from the appendix to the book where only father and son would be mentioned, but not a third generation, as in the genealogical register.

3. Sayings of Sirach in Rabbinic Literature.

Large as is the collection of Sirach's sayings in Rabbinical literature with which the Editors have enriched the Hebrew fragments of Sirach, a few have been omitted by them which deserve a place in their edition.

With IV, 30, μὴ οἴσθι ὡς λέων ἐπὶ φίλοι σου, the Editors compare לְעַלְמָם אֶל יִתְלָי אֶרְדָם אִימָה תִּתְהַגֵּן בַּתְּךָ בַּתְּךָ, T. B. Gitten, 6 b. The author of this maxim is R. Chisdai the Amora. It is hardly a happy parallel, lacking as it does the simile of the lion. I fancy that more appropriate would be the following citation in the form of a Baraita of R. Meir: ר' מאיר אומר כל המשיא בתו לעם הארץ כאלו כופתה ומינחה לפני הארי. The husband's rudeness is here compared to the lion's ferocity. Cp. also Derech Erez Zuta, c. 3: וּשְׁפֵל רוח בפנֵי כל הארגם ולא נושא ביתך יותר מכל אדם. Derech Erez Zuta, c. 3, תחולת קלות ראש בנשים פתח לניואוף, is a parallel to Sirach xxv. 24: ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἀρχὴ ἀμαρτίας. Cp. also Derech E. Zuta, c. 7, אחר הארץ ולא אחר אישת, with Sirach xxv. 15, συνοικήσαι λέοντι . . . ἢ . . . μετὰ γυναικὸς πονηρᾶς.

מכאן אמרו חכמים כל המרבה שיחה עם האשה גורם רעה לעצמו וסופו יורש נינהם was already recognized by Geiger as derived from Sirach. See the essay already referred to (*Posthumous Writings*, III, 276), quoted by the Editors of the Hebrew fragment of Sirach. The same sentence is to be found in the Syriac version of Sirach ix. 12. Cp. also Derech Erez Rabba, c. 1 ad finem: לא תרבה שיחה עם האשה. But the next sentence should not be omitted in a collection of Sirach's sayings in Rabbinical literature, for the connexion between Babli Erubin, 54 a, חתוף ואבול¹, and Sirach xiv. 11, has been already pointed out by Geiger (ib. p. 278 note). See also Derenbourg's *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine*, p. 50, note 1.

It is noteworthy that as in this instance a sentence, whose

¹ The same sentence occurs also in Eliahu Rabba, c. 25: אף גשוריוה לאך מן היטלים הזה... ובוי... ואח"כ לאך מן היטלים הזה.

introductory formula **מכאן אמרו חכמים** points to its antiquity, is traceable to Sirach, so it is with other sayings that bear the same characteristic heading. In the Midrash on Psalm xxii. 7, p. 184 of Buber's edition, occurs the following purely Hebraic sentence: **שנו רבותינו מתוך כעם רצון, מתוך אפיקלה אורה, מתוך רוגן רחמים.** מתוך צרה Each of these phrases is then annotated. Buber *in loco* indicates three places in the *Jalkut* where the passage is to be found, but its origin, he adds, he is unable to give. Introduced by the same formula are the following passages in the *Eliahu Zuta*, c. 16: **שכ' שנו חכמים במשנה:** **אל תחן עיןך במנון שאיןו שלך שהן שוקעות בארץ אפיקלו אם הם בשעריהם.** **שבר שנו חכמים במשנה אל תשמע לאזין דברים בטלים;** *ibid.* These two latter sentences are extant almost word for word in the *Derekh Erez Zuta*, c. 4 (middle of the chapter), while the second of them occurs also in *T. B. Kethuboth*, 5 b. The citation from the Mishna can only refer to the tractate *Derekh Erez*, which we know otherwise is called Mishna. Zunz curiously remarks (l. c., 2nd edition, 122 b) of the sentence in the *Eliahu Zuta*, "Probably from one of the lost larger Mishnas." He overlooked the fact that it is contained in *Derekh Erez*. The very style of the sentences under discussion is such that they point to earlier sources. The Book of Sirach naturally suggests itself as the original. Cp. xx. 8 ἔστιν εὐοδία ἐν κακοῖς ἀνδρὶ with **מתוך צרה רוחה** and the antitheses till verse 12. Sirach v. 8 μὴ ἐπεχεί ἐπὶ χρήμασιν ἀδίκοις with **אל תחן עיןך במנון שאיןו שלך**, and Sirach immediately thereupon gives as the reason that such possessions have no lasting value. For **דברים בטלים** cp. vii. 14.

For xxvi. 20, where merchants are referred to, the parallel should not be **לא תמצא תורה . . . בתנראים** (*Fritzsche in loco*), but *Derekh Erez Zuta*, c. 10 (cp. also *Babli Pesachim*, 50 b): **שכ' הבא ממדיות הים :**

4. The word **תחליף**.

In the verse **מלא חשלומות ונבייא תחליף תחתיך** xlvi. 8, the small word **תחליף** has created quite a small literature. The English translation implies that the Editors took the word **תחליף** as a verb in the second person, and in this they have the support of the old Latin version which renders as follows: *Qui unguis regem ad paenitentiam et prophetas facis successores post te.* The Latin translation took both halves of the verse in the second person, which is possible as, in verse 4, Elijah is apostrophized. Whether the Latin translator read **המשיח** instead of **המושח** need therefore not be further discussed. If, however, it is questionable whether the verb in the first

half of the verse is in the second person, it is undoubtedly so in the second half. The word חַלְיָף is probably a verb, and in the second person like תַּחֲחִיךְ following it. As Professor Kaufmann rightly points out in the *Monatsschrift*, XLI, 338, this view is confirmed by 1 Kings xix. 16. No reliance can here be placed on the Greek and Syriac versions, as they seem to have had another text before them. The author of the Latin version's sole inaccuracy is the free rendering of נְבִיא in the plural. The translation *successorem facere* for חַלְיָף suits the context. It recalls the Syriac word תַּחֲלֹפָא, the Syriac equivalent for ἀντάλλαγμα (Matt. xvi. 26), and which according to Brockelmann (*Lexicon Syriacum*, p. 131) signifies *compensatio=recompense*. Sirach then would say: "Thou leavest in thy place a prophet as a recompense." Though Professor Kaufmann, Professor Bacher (JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, IX, 557), and recently the Editors (ibid., p. 563), in contradiction to their previously expressed views, regard חַלְיָף as a substantive, it is nevertheless much simpler to take it as a verb in xlviii. 8. In the second passage where the word occurs, it is better to take it thus, though it must be admitted that none of the ancient versions supports this view. The text refers to the judges; and the author when mentioning them appends the eulogy: "הֵyi זֶרֶם לְבָרְכָה וְשֵׁם חַלְיָף לְבָנָיהם" "May their memory be blessed and so that thou (God) mayest leave their name as a recompense (for their virtues) to their children." If this text might be explained without reference to the verse already discussed above, it would admit of a still simpler meaning, חַלְיָף=innovare, as in Isaiah ix. 31: כִּי חַלְיָפוּ כֵּחַ וּקְוֹי הֵי, ibid. xli. 1; cp. Job xiv. 7, xxix. 20. "And renew their name for their children"—an excellent antithesis to the first half of the verse. The examples from Job show that חַלְיָף by itself without כֵּחַ has also the same sense. The sentence may finally also be equivalent to וְכֵחַ שֵׁם חַלְיָף לְבָנָיהם, a transition from the third to the second person that need not surprise one in a work that imitates the old Hebrew literature. On the Eulogy cp. also 1 Chron. ix. 20¹ וּפִינְחָס נָגִיד הִיא עַלְיָם לְפָנָים הֵעָמָו.

נְחַצְּקָן נִמְצָא חַמִּים לְעֵת בְּלָה הִיא, in the third passage, xliv. 17, one is constrained to assume חַלְיָף as a substantive. Here the word presents no difficulty as shown by the writers cited above. The term חַלְפָתָא which the Syriac version here uses, and to which reference is made in the glossary (Brockelmann, l.c.), also renders *compensatio*. I will only add that a word of similar formation occurs in the small fragment quoted by Nachmanides at the

¹ According to the accents לְבָנָים הֵעָמָו are separate, not דְּבָנָים הֵעָמָו. This would be the oldest example of a eulogy. Cp. Bacher, l.c., p. 553.

beginning of his Commentary on the Pentateuch from the book of Wisdom: חכמתא רבתא דשלמה which, as N. Brüll remarks in a large note (on Zunz's *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge*, 2nd edition, p. 130), should really be שוחלפָא. Many Syriac and Aramaic forms derived from the root חלף are there given which are useful for the passage in Sirach. In *Ebed Jesu*, 64, שוחלפָא = *variatio*, Hebrew חמורה. Cp. חליפה and חמורה in the prayer for the Eve of the Day of Atonement. The phrase עבד שוחלפָא also occurs¹ (Sachau, *Inedita*, 128. 15). The talmudical saying תלמיד חכם שמח ולא הניח חמורה (see also *Eliahu Zuta*, c. 16) is quite parallel to the Sirach sentence.

The phrase לעת בלה היה חליף would then mean: "At the time of destruction there was a change, a reward, a compensation"; but not "Noah is a recompense," for in spite of the analogy of חליף it is highly improbable that חליף is used in a concrete sense; while there are many examples in support of the substantive in the abstract sense. It may be added that Nachmanides mistranslates the word שוחלפָ' in the version accompanying the quotation, as can easily be seen from the context.

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¹ Correspondence of I. Löw in Szegedin. For the name סירא = אסיא the same scholar compares אחירם = חירם; see *Revue des Études Juives*, XV, 200.